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State Older-Driver Relicensing: Conflicts, Chaos, and the Search for Policy Consensus

There is great diversity among regulatory strategies governing older-driver relicensing throughout the United States. The states' combined policies represent a troublesome national approach to mobility for older people, which is mired in a debate over defining "old" and testing issues rather than focused on supporting transportation needs.

**By Meredith J. Coley and
Joseph F. Coughlin**

Transportation is part of a quality life—connecting older adults to family, friends, health care, and all those great and little activities that, together, *are* life. Despite the obvious importance of mobility to healthy aging and personal identity, the aging policy agenda has provided remarkably little space between the goliaths of economic security and health care for policy makers to craft a comprehensive approach to meeting the transportation demands of an aging society.¹

Transportation policy for older adults is the product of a continuing and dynamic conflict over the issue of older-driver relicensing, rather than a systematic discussion of transportation needs, preferences, costs, individual planning, housing decisions, and the true viability of existing alternatives to driving. Instead, ambiguity, emotion, uncertain technology, and a fragmented policy system contribute to a chaotic and continuing search for policy consensus that is focused on relicensing rather than lifelong mobility.

Driving, Well-Being, and Future Transportation Demands

In the United States, transportation is driving. The vast majority of Americans, young and old, choose

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to use the car as their primary mode of transportation. However, driving is far more than transportation. Acquiring a driver's license is a rite of passage of youth into adulthood. For older people, the "right to drive" is synonymous with personal freedom and independence.

The ability to go where you want, when you want is routinely identified by older people as an important part of their personal identity. The driver's license has even been referred to as the "personal identikit" for older people. Older adults perceive the loss of driving privileges as synonymous with being "handicapped and disabled."² Beyond the "feelings" of independence and freedom, researchers have observed a marked decline in mental as well as physical well-being as a result of reduced mobility and driving cessation.³

Moreover, both the numbers and characteristics of the next generation of retirees suggest that driving will be an even greater part of healthy aging. The Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, are likely to be in better health, earn higher incomes, and have more education than their parents and grandparents. Together, these characteristics contribute to a future generation of people who are likely to forge a lifestyle of active aging. Generally, if people have some disposable income, relatively good health, and a wide range of interests (social activities, hobbies, part-time work, continuing education, volunteering), they will want to engage in an active life beyond retirement, relying on the car as they did when they were younger.

Some researchers have already forecasted a rise in older adult driving. One study, for example, suggests that the vehicle miles traveled by people 65 years old and older may double over the next 20 years and triple over the next three decades.⁴ When compared with their mothers, Sarah S. Bush argues that the more active and independent lifestyles of future older women are likely to be a significant factor of future travel demand.⁵ However, this research also suggests a dramatic increase in the future number of older-driver fatalities. Research indicates that projected older-driver fatalities may approach 20,000 per year in 20 years, compared with approximately 7,000 deaths today.⁶

Aging, Driving and Safety

As people age, physical, mental, and cognitive capacities begin to change. Age-related disease may

influence driving capacity. Medications associated with the treatment of those diseases may also affect function. Because the effects of aging are different for everyone, what remains unclear is when aging affects driving capacity. For some people, daily activities of life become more difficult to accomplish and everyday actions simply become more challenging. For others, good health and active living continue beyond retirement and well into "old age."

These changes include poor vision at night and weaker contrast sensitivity, affecting people as early as age forty—an age that most would feel uncomfortable calling "old." Most people also experience an increased sensitivity to glare, which can affect nighttime driving. In addition, it becomes much more difficult to read roadway signs.

Decreased strength and flexibility also accompanies aging. Some people experience greater difficulty entering and exiting the cars, in addition to experiencing more difficulty with neck and trunk rotation critical to adequately compensating for natural blind spots and obstructions to vision. Certain medical conditions also have the potential to impair driving ability. These include, but are not limited to, heart disease, lung disease, arthritis, and stroke.

Cognitively, response times often become slower, and reactions to sensory inputs slow with age.⁷ In the case of accidents, a split-second decision can make the difference between an accident and a close call. Stress also contributes to even slower reaction times. Older drivers sometimes have difficulty dividing their attention among the subtasks that accompany driving, e.g., cell phone use.

These conditions, which commonly accompany aging in many people, affect the driving capabilities of people of all ages to some degree. Most older drivers compensate for diminished function with self-regulation—that is, they choose not to drive in conditions under which they feel uncomfortable, such as operating at night, driving on major highways, and driving in poor weather—thereby reducing their exposure to hazards and the chances of accidents.

Despite the widely used practice of self-regulation, most public attention focuses on the issue of state laws and regulation of older-driver relicensing. This policy discussion—already confounded by the question of how aging affects driving capacity—is made more complex by the ambiguity of conflicting interpretations of statistics. At least two competing versions of reality can be drawn from national traffic safety data.

One interpretation of older-driver safety can be based upon the fatal crash involvement per 100 million miles driven by driver age group. When plotted, this data forms a “U” or a “bathtub-like” line that shows drivers between 16 and 24 and those 70 and older are the most likely to die in a crash. Pointing to this data, advocates of “tougher” relicensing regulations argue that older drivers are a hazard to themselves and others on the road. Often missing from this argument is further discussion of how and why these people die, e.g., the role of elder frailty in surviving a crash that may not be fatal for a younger driver.

However, a second interpretation can be drawn from traffic safety statistics. This data indicates that older drivers are only a modest risk compared with other groups. If fatalities are plotted per one million people and age group, an image emerges that portrays older adults as among the safest with the youngest cohort, those aged 16 to 24, as the most likely to die on the nation’s roads.

Regulation of Older-Driver Relicensing in the 50 States

Beginning with a crash, a predictable policy life cycle begins. Media attention frames the event as a question of whether “older drivers” are safe or a roadway hazard. Interest groups on both sides of the debate mobilize to engage state legislators for two things: to pass legislation to restrict or strengthen older-driver relicensing requirements, or to redefine the issue as the need to identify operator impairment at any age, not just old age. The media debate and hearings that typically follow an accident are most often fueled by an accident where one or more people are injured. Grieving parents of a dead child are most often at the center of the political conflict in those states where there has been significant mobilization to legislate restrictions or special requirements for older drivers. Emotionally charged organizations started by families in Missouri, New York, and California (as just a few examples), define the “older-driver problem” as an issue of public safety and health.

Likewise, those wishing to contain the momentum of additional regulations are typically older adults who respond to these demands as understandable, though misguided, efforts to impose unfair and discriminatory restrictions on a class of people on the basis of age alone. Those opposing restrictions on the basis of age argue that the policy should be crafted to identify the “impaired driver” of any age,

not competent drivers who happen to be “old.” These individuals and groups see their cause as defending the right of older adults to be treated as any other driver as a matter of policy equity. Their inspiration is powered by the not-so-subtle reality that the driver’s license is key to most people’s identity, freedom, and independence.

Both sides leverage to their political advantage the ambiguity surrounding the questions of, “what is an older driver” and, “what is the correct interpretation of traffic safety statistics?” Legislative hearings are held and proposed legislation is debated. Most often the issue is quickly displaced by other events, but occasionally incremental changes are made to licensing laws governing older drivers. What is tragically lost in this life cycle is the opportunity to leverage the event and debate into a more comprehensive discussion about the need for transportation options beyond the automobile and a systematic examination of how we test and license drivers of all ages. Instead, what is left is a fragmented, sometimes chaotic, set of regulations that, combined, are the nation’s response to the transportation needs of today’s older adults.

Method and Approach

To demonstrate the variation and diversity of state laws, a baseline of driver relicensing regulations in each of the 50 states was developed. Table 1 (at the end of this article) provides an overview of the state relicensing policies governing older drivers.

Information for this compilation was obtained from several sources. The *AAA Digest of Motor Laws* was the first source of information, followed by contacting the motor vehicle agency within each state, e.g., the agency charged with the issuance of driver’s licenses. Every effort was made to ensure the validity of the information contained within, but in certain cases some information was not available.

In selected states, where documented regulations were incomplete or unclear, telephone interviews were conducted to better understand what the rules are in each state, as well as how they are implemented. The Internet was also used to locate some information, but not all Web sites had comprehensive information available.

What Is Old?

Nowhere is the policy ambiguity surrounding the older-driver issue better demonstrated than by

identifying what is old. Within the context of physical changes associated with aging, the discussion of older-driver safety ultimately arises. Are older people mentally and physically capable to drive? In most cases, the answer is yes. However, regardless of age, sometimes a person's mental or physical capacities are such that driving is hazardous both to the individual and to others on the roadways.

The science of aging and transportation remains unclear. While night vision deteriorates as early as age forty, medical conditions or medications taken at a younger age may impair driver safety. In the face of scientific uncertainty the debate of what is an older driver is delegated to the political process. The politics associated with age-related restrictions are complicated and often lead many states to enact no special rules for people who are considered "older."

Policymakers find it difficult to classify what "older" means because chronological age is a poor indicator of physical or cognitive capacity. Because everyone does not age the same way at the same time, requiring a driving test from one person at age sixty might be in order, but it might not be necessary in the case of a second individual. Sixty-five is a convenient benchmark, but it can be highly arbitrary as a basis for determining a person's capacity. More broadly, "old" is both a highly relative and subjective attribute. Many consider anyone fifteen or twenty years their senior to be "old." Someone twenty years old may well consider forty to be old; someone who is fifty may feel the same way about someone aged sixty-five.

As the Table beginning on page 50 shows, within the realm of driving regulation policy, the definition of old is extremely variable. The youngest age at which a state alters driving privileges is fifty, while the oldest age is eighty-one. The former is set by Oregon (with mandatory vision tests every eight years), and the latter by Illinois (with a shorter valid license term). The states requiring changes at specific ages begin with Oregon at age fifty; Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Maine, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania at sixty; California, Delaware, Iowa, Louisiana, and Missouri at seventy; Hawaii at seventy-one; Indiana, Montana, New Hampshire, and New Mexico at seventy-five; and finally Illinois at eighty-one. This variation reveals how uncertain state policymakers are in their understanding of what is an "older driver."

Uncertain Technology and Older-Driver Testing

One of the most difficult parts of the older-driver issue is the lack of understanding surrounding testing. Even if states *do* arrive at a policy consensus to test after a certain age, what is the most appropriate and effective test? Many different types of tests are available, each with their proponents and requisite number of supporting studies. However, no clear scientific or policy consensus exists on what and how to test a driver at a particular age.

A written exam or a few minutes of road time is hardly a true assessment for driver capacity, although it remains the threshold for the first license. Vision is most often identified by policymakers as "the" standard for retesting. Yet, the capacity to see well is only one part of the driving task. Cognitive function is crucial as well. Knowledge and reflexes are equally critical. Perhaps the most confounding, and the most important and difficult of all to assess, is judgment. According to many licensing officials, the primary test used today remains, "how you look coming through the door."

Our survey of current practices indicates that eighteen states impose restrictions upon older drivers. The principal restriction shortens the duration of the valid license period. Time between tests is the nominal approach used by those states that do regulate on the basis of age. The state-level review covers the basic functions associated with a driver's license; the length of time for which the license is valid; the ways to renew a license; any type of physical, vision, or mental testing required; and the specific visual ability required to have a driver's license. The length of time for a license to remain valid varies among the states. The renewal conditions seen in Table 1 show the steps involved for a person to renew his or her license upon its expiration by state.

Physical testing refers to any type of test that one must take to renew his or her license, but this category does not include assessment of mental competency. This type of testing can be a knowledge test (written or sign recognition) or an ability test (driving, vision, hearing). Vision testing refers to the standard eye test that most states require for an initial license and/or renewal. Last, the vision acuity and peripheral requirements refer to the visual ability of the driver and the horizontal field of vision someone must have in order to receive and maintain

a driver's license in each state, respectively. Mental testing refers to any test that could reveal a condition that would make someone unfit to drive, such as periods of lost consciousness or instability.

License Length and Renewal Conditions

Driver's licenses are valid for a period ranging from four to five years in thirty-nine states. A few states maintain licenses for six or eight years, usually depending on the driver's age. Arizona's original license is valid from issuance until the driver turns sixty-five. As shown in the Table, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, New York, and Oregon allow some licenses to remain valid for up to eight years. (North Carolina provides some eight-year licenses while in transition to a five-year license.) Tennessee and West Virginia are also in a state of transition allowing up to seven-year licenses until they all return to five-year licenses. States providing licenses of six years include Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, and Texas.

The eleven states that mandate a shorter license length as the driver ages include Arizona (age sixty-five), Hawaii (age seventy-one), Illinois (age eighty-one), Indiana (age seventy-five), Iowa (age seventy), Kansas (age sixty-five), Louisiana (age seventy), Maine (age sixty-five), Missouri (age seventy), Montana (age seventy-five), and New Mexico (age seventy-five). These locations generally require a license length of one or two years at this age.

With a shorter license length, states are able to stay more informed of the changes occurring on an individual basis over the years. While someone might be perfectly capable of driving at age eighty, when the license expires at age eighty-two he or she might have experienced some changes that adversely affect his or her driving abilities. In this case, if the license had been valid for four years the driver might have been unsafe for a longer period of time. While this is by no means always the case, enough evidence has convinced eleven states to alter the lengths of their licenses for older people.

Physical and Mental Testing

While some states provide a shorter valid license period as people age, others simply require more frequent vision tests or other physical tests. Physical testing includes any type of driving test, written test, or oral test. Mental testing describes any type of requirement that the driver be tested for mental and

cognitive function to determine whether he/she has the appropriate mental status to drive.

Vision Requirements

Vision testing is required in all states for original licenses. States vary, however, on the matter of whether further vision testing is later required. Eleven states—Alabama, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia—do not require renewal or periodic vision testing, and of these only Connecticut and Oregon require periodic vision testing after a certain age (sixty-five and fifty, respectively).

Although vision tests are the most often discussed as a test for older drivers, they are neither easily passed nor implemented. For example, in Connecticut where vision tests are now age-based, the debate to pass the legislation was hotly contested and stalled for many years. Even after passage, the actual funding and implementation of the law took significant time.

Visual acuity requirements vary broadly, but typically nothing less than 20/60 (often with corrective lenses) passes and allows a non-restricted driver's license. Peripheral requirements vary widely throughout the United States, and some states have no peripheral requirement for a regular driver's license. Many of the telephone representatives contacted in this study did not know the exact requirements for the peripheral vision and some were unable to provide this information. One indicated that there were no requirements for vision other than passing the vision test. Most Web sites do not contain such detailed numbers, because the vision tests given on-site usually tells the licenser whether the driver has passed or failed the test, not what his/her actual vision is compared to the requirement.

Knowledge, Road, and Medical-Based Testing

Only fourteen states have a procedural system that requires knowledge or road testing while the driver maintains a valid license. Either the state tests with each renewal, tests if the driver has received any motor violations since the last renewal, or tests if the examiner feels the person should be further tested. Knowledge or driving tests are required in the case of an expired license by only four states. Physical tests for most areas are required only in cases of a new driver's license (obtained by most people as teenagers).

The variability in physical testing requirements and standards differ across the states. In the District of Columbia, a driver older than seventy must submit a doctor's report upon renewal, and a mandatory re-examination is required for a driver over the age of seventy-five. Idaho requires a written test every eight years and a road test if the examiner feels that the applicant might have difficulty driving. Illinois requires a driving test for those over the age of seventy-five, though the test may be required of persons younger than seventy-five as well. Testing in Iowa is also determined at the discretion of the examiner if a physical or mental problem is thought to be possible with the applicant. Kansas requires an open-book written test with each renewal.

While Louisiana does not require any changes if the licensee has been a resident of Louisiana, someone over the age of sixty applying for a first license must submit a doctor's report about his or her vision and physical condition. A written test is required for renewal in Michigan, and a road test is required if the license has been expired for more than four years. Missouri requires a sign recognition test for regular renewal. Tests in Nebraska are determined at the discretion of the examiner. Nevada requires a written test with three or more tickets in four years and a driving test with six or more tickets in four years. New Hampshire requires a mandatory license re-examination driving test for anyone over the age of seventy-five.

New Mexico requires a driving and written test if the license has been expired more than one year. A sign test is required for renewal in North Carolina and further testing is required of anyone convicted of a traffic violation since the last license was issued or the license has been expired more than one year. Similarly, Ohio requires a written and driving test if the license has been expired for more than six months. South Carolina requires a knowledge test if the driver has received more than five points in a two-year period. Re-examination is required in Washington only if merited by a physical or mental condition. Wyoming tests for skills once in an eight-year period at the discretion of the examiner. Most other states allow someone to continually renew his or her license through the years providing (in most cases) that the driver's vision remains intact.

Mental Testing

No state requires a mental or competency test for anyone who reaches a certain age. States that do re-

quire a driver to see a doctor usually do so at the discretion of the examiner. Sometimes the criteria for testing are determined by the appearance of the licensee upon arrival at the examination office. One state respondent indicated that if someone could cope with the relicensing examiner he/she would possess all the mental facilities necessary to drive. Several states—including Colorado, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, and Utah—specifically pose questions regarding medical history or current health upon license renewals. Georgia, Hawaii, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin indicated that they require a mental-health examination if a notification is received from a doctor, police officer, or relative of the driver in question. Most departments contacted indicated that they did not require any type of mental examination, but most likely anyone who attempts to renew a license in person who does not appear mentally competent to drive would be examined or questioned further.

While a mental disease could be detrimental to anyone behind the wheel, most states feel that their examiners would be able to assess any problem by sight. Hopefully, drivers who answer questions regarding their mental state do so truthfully, and license examiners are adequately trained to identify and respond to a potential problem.

If a driver of any age has a physical or mental impairment that may affect safe driving, most states have some type of medical review board. Generally staffed by agency personnel, sometimes with a full-time physician or volunteer physicians that meet periodically, these bureaus review special cases referred to them by examiners, physicians and law enforcement. Although these medical review boards are crucial to identify impaired drivers of all ages, their levels of activity and efficacy vary widely across the nation. Selected states reported that their medical review board had not met for more than a year, while others have institutionalized their work within the agency.

Driver Relicensing as a Problem of Institutional Capacity and Implementation

Political debate may be fueled by the passions of competing values and definitions of a policy problem, but the currency of the contest is often the attractiveness of readily available, acceptable, and affordable solutions. In the case of older-driver relicensing there is a dearth of attractive solutions.

However, even if policy consensus were formed around an age and a test, how would it be effectively and efficiently implemented?

Most state testing agencies barely have the institutional capacity to accomplish the missions they have today. Most new testing methods would require large capital outlays, training of personnel, and physical changes to facilities. Such a change would demand increases in budgetary and personnel authority. Each of these testing bureaus must compete with other agencies and issues for budgets, people and power. Driver licensing, for any age, rarely achieves agenda status when confronted with other policy problems such as education, health, and crime.

In fact, for most people, the local Department of Motor Vehicles (unfair as it may be) is the department they love to hate. Waiting times to renew and receive a first license are often very long, office hours may be short, and offices may be far apart. Few members of the public, or therefore elected officials, are eager to extend the resources, range of authority, and responsibilities of these organizations because increased requirements would potentially raise taxes and waiting times for visits to obtain and renew licenses.

Summary

In conclusion, many states maintain a system in which licensing changes for people as they age. Most of these systems are as simple as a shortened valid licensing period, while some require full driving exams. As the laws vary depending on state, the persons excluded from a license in one state might be eligible for a license in another. However, as the Table shows, the majority of states have no further requirements as people age; these include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

The requirements to receive and maintain a driver's license vary greatly among the states. While all states require some tests to receive an initial license, later renewals and requirements are quite different. Despite the widespread concern about the relationship between advancing age and driving competency, thirty-three states have no age-specific testing

requirements other than to monitor vision acuity. In many states, even those who increase testing with age, the technology, training, and overall institutional capabilities are not in place to allow more examination of drivers. The organizations that issue and renew licenses are poorly funded, and extensive examination would require more money and training, which is not often publicly or politically supported.

The diversity of regulatory strategies governing older-driver relicensing throughout the nation reflects an ongoing and emotional debate triggered by periodic and local events. However, it is also indicative of a fragmented approach, not to driver relicensing, but to transportation. Diverse as they may be, the states' combined policies represent a troublesome national approach to mobility for older people. This national approach is, for now, mired in a debate over what is old and what is the best test, instead of addressing how we should best support the transportation needs of people throughout their life cycles.

Endnotes

1. Roger W. Cobb et al., *Regulating Older Drivers: How Are the States Coping?*, JOURNAL OF AGING AND SOCIAL POLICY 4, (1997).
2. Joseph F. Coughlin, *Beyond Health and Retirement: Placing Transportation on the Aging Policy Agenda*, 11 PUBLIC POLICY AND AGING REPORT 1, 20 (2001).
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4. Jon E. Burkhardt et al., ECOSOMETRICS, INC., *Mobility and Independence: Changes and Challenges for Older Drivers*, (ADMIN. ON AGING 1998), available at <http://www.ada.dhhs.gov/research/drivers.html> (last visited November 19, 2001).
5. Sarah S. Bush, *Does Future Elderly Transportation Demand Pose a Pending Crisis?* 11 PUBLIC POLICY AND AGING REPORT 15, (2001).
6. See Burkhardt, *supra* note 3.
7. Joannie Fischer, *New Age for the Elderly*, ASEE Prism Online, (AM. SOC'Y. FOR ENG'G EDUC. Dec.1999), at <http://www.asee.org/prism/dec99/html/coverstory.htm> (last visited November 19, 2001).

Table of State Driving Regulations

State	Age-related Restrictions	Length of License (years)	Renewal Conditions (in-person, mail-in, Internet)	Physical Testing	Vision Testing	Visual Requirements	Mental Testing
Alabama	none	4	in person (or by mail if out of state)	written, road sign, driving, and vision required for original	only for original	20/40 or 20/60 with corrective lenses, 110 degrees peripheral	none
Alaska	none	5	in person	written, visual, and driving for original	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none
Arizona	length of license at age 65	from issuance until 65th birthday; then 5	in person	can be done by 3rd party; written (or road may be) required at the examiners discretion	every 12 years (and new photo)	20/40, 70 degrees peripheral	only if you act not mentally competent - up to discretion of examiner
Arkansas	none	4	in person	written or oral, driving and vision for original	with regular renewal and out-of-state transfers	20/40 or 20/50 with corrective lenses, 140 degrees peripheral for person with 2 functional eyes and 105 degrees for person with one functional eye	none
California*	at age 70 not eligible for renewal by mail	usually 5	in person or by mail if good record or if out-of-state	written, road sign, eye, and driving for original	if not renewing over mail (if by mail several times vision test required)	20/200 or better in best corrected eye, unknown peripheral	none
Colorado	none	5 if over 25	in person with eye test; sometimes renewal allowed by mail (randomly chosen by computer)	written, road sign, eye, and driving for original	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	must sign form for each renewal stating that driver has no medical condition with episodes of lost consciousness
Connecticut	vision tests required after age 65, and 2 yr license renewal for persons over age 65 upon request to DMV	4	in person unless 20+ miles from branch office or out-of-state; will use photo on record (certain ages only)	written and oral, vision, and driving for original	for original; required for drivers older than 65	20/40 in each eye with/without corrective lenses, 20/30 if blind in one eye, 90 degrees peripheral in each eye	none unless examiner determines further testing necessary
Delaware	none	5	in person	written, vision, and driving for original; written and road upon renewal at discretion of division	every 5 years	20/40, no peripheral	none

Dist of Colombia*	70+ must submit doctor's report upon renewal; mandatory road test for all drivers over age of 75	5	in person (one-time renewal by mail if 200 or more miles away)	written or road may be req'd based on medical condition (special test may be req'd for applicants over age 70)	with regular renewal	20/40 in one eye with no less than 20/70 in other, unknown peripheral	none
Florida	only if it is determined that you must be retested by officer or doctor	4 or 6 (if safe driver)	in person or by mail, phone, or Internet (for 2 consecutive renewal periods only)	ability to read and understand hwy signs regulating, warning, and directing traffic; driving for original; hearing and vision tests for renewal)	with regular renewal	20/40 each eye and both eyes with/without correction or referred to a doctor (could be as low as 20/70), no peripheral	none but driver questioned about seizures or lost consciousness
Georgia	on individual basis (if DMV receives notification of problem)	4	in person; one renewal by mail if military or student	driving, written, and vision for original	with regular renewal	20/60, 140 degrees total or 70 degrees in each eye peripheral	only if notice is received from law or doctor, etc. (on individual basis)
Hawaii	length of license at age 71	2 for 71+ (6 for 18-71, 4 for 15-18)	in person unless by mail (out-of-state only and only allowed twice)	written, vision, and driving for original; vision test for renewals	with regular renewal	20/40, 140 degrees total or 70 degrees in each eye peripheral	none unless imposed by other people (e.g. medical board)
Idaho	only if referred by family member or physician	4, 8 optional	in person; 4-year license may renew once for 4 more years by mail, next one must be in person; 8-yr licenses cannot renew by mail	written and vision for original; vision required and road test at discretion of examiner for renewals	with regular renewal	20/40 in one eye, no peripheral	none
Illinois	mandatory road test at age 75	4-5 until 81, 2 for 81-87, 1 for 87+	in person; by mail only if temporarily out-of-state	written with renewal (at least every 8 yrs), driving test if 75+ (may be waived up to age 75)	usually on renewal	20/40, 140 degrees peripheral	it is required that drivers who have a medical condition which is likely to cause loss of consciousness must be reported
Indiana	length of license at age 75	4 until 75, 75+3	in person; by mail if overseas or military	written, driving, road sign, and vision for original though road may be waived through department of Driver Education	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none
Iowa	length of license at age 70	4 from birthday until 70, 2 for 70+	in person only (as of June 1, 2000)	optional on part of examiner - if mental or physical problem thought to be possible	with regular renewal	20/40, 140 degrees peripheral	optional on part of examiner

* Indicates incomplete information

Table of State Driving Regulations (cont'd)

State	Age-related Restrictions	Length of License (years)	Renewal Conditions (in person, mail-in, Internet)	Physical Testing	Vision Testing	Visual Requirements	Mental Testing
Kansas	length of license at age 65	probationary 14-16, 4 for 16-21 and 65+, 6 for 21-65	in person unless military or out-of-country	written (open book) and vision tests for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none
Kentucky	none	4	in person unless full-time military or temporarily out-of-state	written, driving and road sign, vision, hearing, and physical disability tests for original	not on renewal unless license is expired	20/40 for no restrictions or 20/60 restricted to glasses and failed 20/60 reviewed by medical board, 110 degrees peripheral	none
Louisiana	length of license at age 70	4 until 69, 2 for 70+	in person; by mail in certain circumstances (out-of-state and not 70+)	persons 60+ applying for first license must submit doctor's report about vision and physical condition	with regular renewal	20/40, peripheral unavailable	none
Maine	length of license at age 65	6 until 65, then 4	in person	oral or written, road sign, driving, and vision for original	"regular driver's license renewal includes a vision test" but also at first renewal after ages 40 and every renewal after age 62 (40-45, 52-57, 62 and older may renew by mail and be tested by their physician)	20/40 without restrictions or 20/60 with, 140 degrees peripheral without restrictions and 110 with	none, but if they have medical problems doctor(s) required to fill out form
Maryland	if 70+ and applying for new license, must present proof of previous satisfactory operation of a motor vehicle, a written certification from a licensed physician attesting to general physical and mental qualification	5	in person unless outside of state temporarily	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, 140 degrees peripheral	none - question on application to ask if driver is ok to drive
Massachusetts	none	5	in person	only for original	with regular renewal	20/40, 120 degrees peripheral	none

Michigan	none	4	in person; one additional four-yr period allowed by mail	road for all new drivers and if license expired over 4 yrs; written and visual for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, 140 degrees peripheral with two eyes or 120 degrees with one good eye	none - required to ask if in past 6 months haven't had blackouts or other physical or mental problems to drive safely
Minnesota	none	4 if over 21	in person - vision and new photo req'd unless out-of-state	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, 100 degrees peripheral (added together)	none
Mississippi	only if renewal attendant detects some reason that one is unfit to drive	1 for 16-18, 4 for 18+	in person; Military stationed out-of-state allowed to renew by mail	only for original	only for original	20/40, no peripheral	only if renewal attendant detects some reason that one is unfit to drive
Missouri	length of license at age 70	born in even year get 6-yr license (21-69) odd year then 3-year; over 70 gets 3-year license; 16-18 is 2 yrs, 18-21 license for 3 years	in person unless out-of-state military	vision and sign recognition for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40 in either or both without restrictions, up to 20/160 with varying degrees of restrictions, 55 degrees peripheral in both left and right eyes or 85 degrees in either eye with restrictions	none, but questions on verification sheet regarding seizures, etc.
Montana	length of license at age 75, and 75+ may be tested again upon examiners judgement	everyone gets 8-yr license unless younger than 21, 21-75 get 8-yr license, 75+ get 4-year license	in person or mail in (only once)	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none - application asks questions about this type of information
Nebraska	none	5	in person; by mail for only two more years (2.5% chosen randomly)	vision required and other decided at discretion of examiner	with regular renewal	20/40 without restrictions, 140 degrees peripheral	asked questions regarding medical history - medical statement might be required
Nevada	vision test and good physical condition at age 65 or may have doctor sign form instead	4	by mail once every 8 years or in person	vision, written (if 3 or more tickets in 4 yrs), and driving (if 6 or more tickets in last 4 yrs) for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none
New Hampshire	driving test at age 75	4	in person	vision for renewal and mandatory license re-examination driving test for anyone older than 75	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	none

* Indicates incomplete information

Table of State Driving Regulations (cont'd)

State	Age-related Restrictions	Length of License (years)	Renewal Conditions (in person, mail-in, Internet)	Physical Testing	Vision Testing	Visual Requirements	Mental Testing
New Jersey	none	4	in person, mail, phone, or internet	written and vision for original and new residents	only for original	20/50, no peripheral	none
New Mexico	length of license at age 75	4 or 8 until 74, 1 for 75+	in person	road, written, and vision if license expired more than 1 year	with regular renewal	20/40 in one eye or 20/70 with both eyes, no peripheral	none
New York	none	8	in person or mail with form filled out by doctor	written, vision, and road-sign, and 5-hr classroom course for original	with regular renewal	20/40 but no less than 20/70, 140 degrees peripheral	none
North Carolina	none	between 4 and 8, trying to get back on 5-year plan (age determines length of license)	in person; by mail if out of state at time of expiration	no written for renewal unless person has been convicted of a traffic violation since license was last issued, or he/she suffers from a mental or physical condition that impairs his ability to drive; sign and vision test for renewal, testing required for anyone with a license expired more than 1 year (how much testing at the discretion of the examiner)	with regular renewal	20/40, no peripheral	at discretion of examiner to medical unit if test warranted
North Dakota	none	4 unless new then could be 3 or 4	in person	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, 105 degrees peripheral	at discretion of examiner
Ohio*		4	in person req'd (vision screening)	vision required, written and driving tests if license expired 6+ months for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40, unknown peripheral	none
Oklahoma	none	4	in person or by mail without photograph (no digital imaging)	written, vision, and driving for original	only for original or if license expired more than 3 years	20/40, no peripheral	none

Oregon	vision test required at age 50	4 until 10/00, 8 if after 10/01/00 - going to 8 year issuances	in person required if over 50, if younger than 50 and not turning so within 4 years may renew by mail	knowledge, sign, driving, and vision for original	every 8 years if older than age 50	20/40, 110 degrees peripheral	at discretion of examiner or if out-of-state medical requirements on record
Pennsylvania	length of license at age 65 optional	4 until 64, at age 65 license may be 2 (optional)	in person or by internet	only for original	only for original or random retest - not on renewal	20/40 uncorrected or 20/70 daylight driving only, 120 degrees peripheral	none
Rhode Island	none	5	in person	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	40/40 or 40/20, unknown peripheral	none
South Carolina*	none	5	in person	vision required, knowledge test for renewal if more than 5 points in 2-yr period for renewal	with regular renewal	20/40 but up to 20/70 in one eye if other eye at 20/200, unknown peripheral	none
South Dakota	none	5	in person, by mail if out-of-town	vision for renewal	with regular renewal	20/50 but 20/60 can be restricted and 20/70 denied, no peripheral	none
Tennessee	none	3-7 based on age or date of birth; 22 is 3 yr, 23 is 7, trying to get everyone on 5-yr renewal	in person, by mail (if renewed in person year before), or internet	only for original	only for original	20/40, no peripheral	none
Texas	none	2 for 16-18, 4 or 5 or 6 for 18+ until 1/01/02 then all 6 for 18+	in person, by mail if eligible (picture is on file), or on website	vision for renewal if in person	with regular renewal	20/50 with corrective lenses or 20/40 without, no peripheral	none
Utah	none	5	in person; every other cycle done by mail (if driver has no suspensions)	written and vision for renewal	with regular renewal, but if older than age 65 eye test may be given at personal physician's office and sent in with renewal	20/40, 120 degrees peripheral	at any time medical information reported by questionnaire then driver must have a medical profile, or doctors or police officers can write in with concerns
Vermont	none	2 for 16 and 17, 4 for 18+	in person or by mail	only for original	only for original	20/40, peripheral requires that eyes must be able to look left and right at nose	at discretion of examiner or if note sent in from doctor or police officer

* Indicates incomplete information

Table of State Driving Regulations (cont'd)

State	Age-related Restrictions	Length of License (years)	Renewal Conditions (in person, mail-in, Internet)	Physical Testing	Vision Testing	Visual Requirements	Mental Testing
Virginia	none	5, expiring at age evenly divisible by 5	in person, mail, phone, fax, or Internet - but every 10 years must take vision test	only for original	for renewal, but waived for mail, phone, fax, or internet renewal	20/40 in one or both or 20/70 if restricted to daylight, 100 degrees peripheral in one or both eyes or 70 degrees if restricted to daylight	only if notified by doctor which is not required by the Commonwealth
Washington*	none	4 until 7/1/00, then 5	in person	vision for renewal; re-examination may be req'd based on physical or mental condition	with regular renewal	20/40, unknown peripheral	mental condition may merit re-examination
West Virginia	none	until age 21, 5 for 21+; changing over it's 3-7 now to years divisible by 5	in person only	only for original	only for original and out-of-state transfer	20/40, no peripheral	none
Wisconsin	none	initial license 2 yrs, 8 for regular - renewals	in person only	only for original; sign and vision for person who holds valid out-of-state license	with regular renewal	20/40, 20 degrees from center in at least one eye peripheral	only if recommended for special road test (by doctor or vision test specialist or police officer)
Wyoming	none	4	by mail if no suspensions within previous four-yr period and if last renewal was in person; else in person	for original, though road may be waived on completion of driver education course; vision and skills test once in 8-yr period at discretion of examiner for renewal	with regular renewal; also with mail-in	20/40, 120 degrees peripheral	at discretion of examiner

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